Mimicry

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Mimicry

by miasmatik

Summary

> *He doesn't resist as they lay him back on the stone, as they wind more rope around his ankles, knot the bindings onto hooks drilled into all four corners of the slab. He doesn't flinch as they tie his wrists above his head and secure the moorings. He stares up at the sky and he doesn't say a thing.*
>
> Hannibal is chosen for the village's annual sacrifice.

Notes

> This is pretty short, but it was fun to write and I even sketched out a comic page for part of it~ ((and who doesn't love a good human sacrifice fic?))

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Will."

A creature in the woods, following him.

"Will."

A broken twig closer than he expected, a spasm of fear hurrying his steps. He's so close to the edge of the forest, so near safety that he can almost reach out and touch it, but the thing is closing in on him and its breath falls across the back of his neck and he can't stop himself, he turns around and-

"Will, hey!"

Will jolts when a hand falls on his shoulder. He looks up to see Beverly staring at him with concern, eyebrows raised. Her lips twitch when he meets her eyes.

"You okay? Looking a little pale there. I mean, more than usual."

Will shakes his head and manages a half-smile at her joking tone. He's still wrapped up in his thoughts, but he doesn't want to worry her any further. As gently as he can, he brushes off her hand.

"I'm fine."

"If you say so," Beverly says, expression doubtful. She's used to his general strangeness, used to him spacing out, but he knows he looks shaken. He can feel the sweat beading along his forehead, the anxiety pooling in the center of his chest. Still, she doesn't push him to elaborate. He likes that about her.

She smirks, but the humor fades with her words. "If you're done daydreaming, I think they're about to begin."

The crowd around them murmurs in anticipation.

Will had been largely ignoring them, but Beverly is right. Up ahead, he can see people parting around a small procession. Two figures lead a third. The knot in his gut doesn't lessen.

"Kinda feel bad for the guy," Beverly whispers, leaning in so she isn't overheard. "Unsuspecting stranger passing through and all, just at the worst time of year."

The man behind the two cloaked figures stumbles a bit, but he catches himself on the rope bound to his wrists. He's naked from the waist up and clad in only a pair of thin linen pants. His chest heaves with a series of deep breaths. His face is carefully blank.

“Sometimes I wish they’d make less of a spectacle of it, y’know? It’s bad enough without everyone in town watching like some kinda fucked up holiday parade.”

Will swallows. He nods, but his eyes don’t leave the man. He watches as the procession passes them, as the man with the tousled hair and broad shoulders is led past where he and Beverly stand further back in the crowd. The people around them shift, pull the hoods up over their faces, and follow in the wake. On reflex, Will mirrors the motion. Beverly does the same.

Several figures wait at the town gate. They light each torch as the group passes by, as the procession leaves the security of guarded walls and heads into the darkness beyond. Will and Beverly stay in the back, nearly the last to cross between the heavy wooden doors. The light from streetlamps fades behind them.

They walk further away from the town, torchlight illuminating the dirt path ahead. There are no more murmurs from the crowd, all gone silent as they trickle towards the tree line. A circular arrangement of lanterns waits in the field ahead. A rectangular platform sits in the middle.

He was so close, so close to the edge of the woods, he could have made it, he could have never looked back, he could have-

The procession stops.

Will doesn’t fight to the front of the crowd like some of the other people. He doesn’t try to get closer to the impending spectacle, to feed a morbid fascination with the yearly proceedings. He sees it in a few of their eyes though. Sees a low-burning glee light up faces under the hoods, mouths twisting upwards in expectation.

Beverly remains with him, nothing but distaste written across her features, and that is another reason he likes her.

“We are here tonight,” one of the processional leaders addresses the crowd, removing his hood as he speaks, “to assure our future. As we have on this night every year.”

The crowd answers as one. “We are grateful for the opportunity.”

The speaker, the one Will knows as Jack Crawford, turns to the bound man. “Let our offering not go unheard.”

“We are grateful for the sacrifice,” the mass of voices chants.

“Allow our health to remain preserved and protect us from further tragedy. May we be blessed this year as we have always been.”

“We are grateful for this blessing.”

Jack waves a hand and several figures emerge from the crowd. They approach the bound man where he stands, still in the center of the circle, and lay their palms on his skin. Together they guide him towards the altar. He doesn’t resist as they lay him back on the stone, as they wind more rope around his ankles, knot the bindings onto hooks drilled into all four corners of the slab. He doesn’t flinch as they tie his wrists above his head and secure the moorings. He stares up at the sky and he doesn’t say a thing.

They gag him anyways, a rip of duct tape interrupting the timelessness of the tradition. The piece they smooth over the man's mouth glints silvery-orange.

"And now, we spill the first blood. May it entice more to be taken."

Jack takes a knife from the woman standing next to him, runs a hand along its honed length, and approaches the altar with measured steps. The crowd ripples. This is the part that they have clambered forward to see.

Will's pulse picks up.

He was so close.

Jack lowers the knife. He draws the blade along the underside of the man's forearm, and the blood rushes upwards immediately. It spills from the parted flesh in rivulets that look nearly black in the torchlight. They drip down the curves of a bicep, pool onto the stone beneath. Jack moves to the other side and repeats.

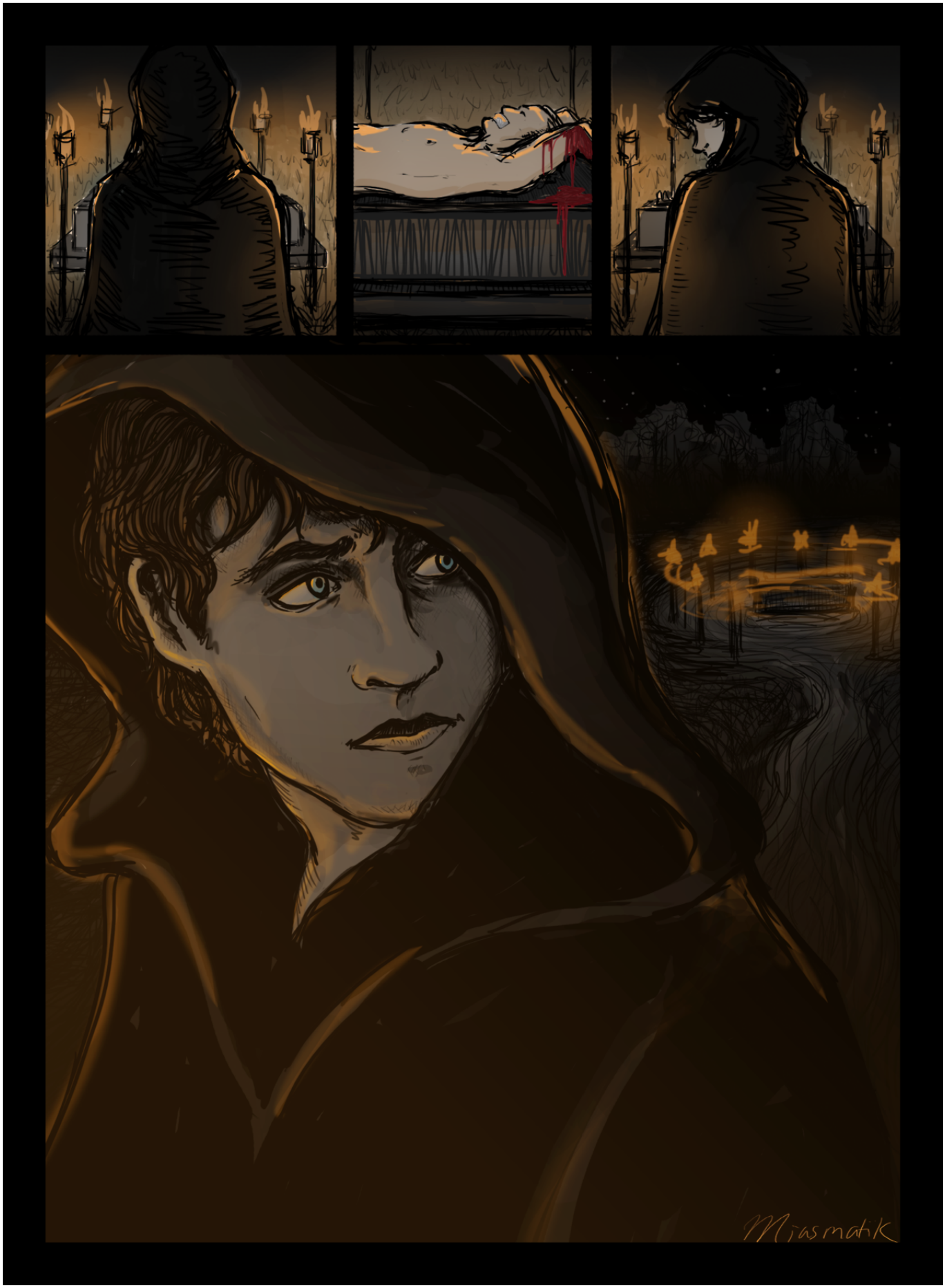
"This sacrifice that we will leave to bleed, we offer up as a feast."

"We are grateful to await your judgment."

An attendant retrieves the knife, and Jack pulls the hood back over his face. He turns and leads the procession away from the altar. The crowd follows. One-by-one the people leave, casting furtive glances to the bound man as they go. Beverly tugs on Will's sleeve once the bulk of the group has set out on the path they came. Away from the trees and toward nights of peaceful sleep.

So close.

She squeezes his arm, and he trails her back to town.


Miasmatik

They part ways at Beverly's door. She gives him an assuring pat against his cheek and tells him to get some rest. She cracks another joke about his pallor, something else about his under-eye rings, but her tone is warm. He tells her to mind her own business and she chuckles. They wish each other goodnight, and with a final wave, he leaves.

Will waits. He waits beneath shadowed eaves, hovering just outside of the street lamps' reach. He waits until the streets have emptied, until the hushed murmurings of *how lucky we got this year* and *if only it was always this easy* have been contained behind closed doors. Guards extinguish torches along the town border before they, too, retreat. The gate is left open. It will not be locked this one night of the year, in a display of trust and humility.

Will waits until he is alone and the town is at peace before he walks back outside of it.

The path is darker now, without the aide of firelight. He uses the twinkling torches in the distance for guidance. Gravel crunches beneath his feet as he treads forward beneath the vast and endless night. The tightness in his gut loosens with every step.

He stands at the edge of the circle and runs his eyes over the figure on the altar, the flames dancing over bare skin. The forest looms ahead, the silence of the trees complete. He pulls the hood from his face and steps into the ring.

He was so close.

The man's eyes follow him as he approaches. They trace the steadiness of his gait, the lines of his face, and brighten considerably once the younger man has come to stand above him. Will fights a tired grin.

So close to never meeting Hannibal.

"They have no idea," Will says, raising a hand to rest on a knot of rope. He doesn't undo it. His fingers crawl to the slits across each of Hannibal's forearms and he pads gently at the drying blood.

Hannibal, beneath the gag, can't respond. But his eyes are filled with an all-too-familiar mischief. When Will rips off the tape, he derives some sort of satisfaction from seeing the older man wince.

"Of course not, dear Will. That would ruin the fun of it."

Will reconsiders the strip of duct tape for a beat, imagines slapping it back across the smug mouth below him, but he lets it drop to the ground. "You just wanted to see my face."

"And what a remarkably expressive face it was. Does your friend suspect anything?"

"Why would she?" Will doesn't move to undo the other restraints, just stands above Hannibal and watches him. "She's known me my whole life. She's used to my particular brand of weird."

Hannibal purrs. "Did she not pick up on your excitement? Your wonderment? Your charmingly misplaced fear?"

So close, but he couldn't help but turn around, and it grabbed him, threw him up against the nearest tree. It curled over him with obsidian skin and sharpened teeth and a cage of antlers and it spoke, framed his face with claws and said: "I've caught you, Will."

Will trails a thumb against Hannibal's cheek, leaves a streak of red in its wake. "No, she didn't suspect a thing."

"Precious, darling boy. Do you think they don't know what you are? What you've always been?"

He leans forward and over Hannibal's face.

"They'll choose you, one day. They'll choose you because they're afraid of you, afraid of what you will be."

Hannibal smiles up at him as Will bends down, as he curls his hands over the ones above older man's head and presses their lips together. His tongue dips between their crease, requesting entry, and when Hannibal is too slow to respond, or too amused by making him wait longer than he has already, Will bites his way in instead. He bites and licks and growls and delves deeper. Once Hannibal has reciprocated, once the taste of iron has tempered his need, Will sighs into the kiss. His brows furrow for a moment, and the ball of tension within him is fully released.

"You shouldn't have to hide any longer."

Will draws back, runs his tongue along the blood at his lips. "Maybe you're right. Maybe it is time we moved on. After all, they were so very rude to you."

"Truly terrible hospitality," Hannibal agrees. Will can tell that he wants to move, that he wants to reach up at Will and dig in with glee, but he remains compliant under the younger man's touch. Settles into his captivity obediently.

"It would be a shame to waste all the effort they put in though, wouldn't it?"

Will moves a knee up onto the altar, swings his other leg around to bracket Hannibal's torso. He breathes out a shaky exhale as he sits against the cloth over Hannibal's thighs, as he rests his weight on the burgeoning excitement beneath him, and just the phantom memory of them as they've been so many times before - *Hannibal inside him, bare and muddied on the forest floor, the blood of another kill on their hands licked clean* - turns the younger man to putty. He peels the robe from his back and reveals his own body naked underneath.

"One thing," he says. "Don't kill Beverly."

Hannibal's fingers twitch beneath his restraints. He asks as though he doesn't know the answer, as if he hadn't planned this precisely, in the most dramatic fashion possible. "And the rest of them?"

Will tilts his head, considering. His hands trace down the planes of the older man's chest, move to frame a motionless ribcage. He presses a kiss to Hannibal's sternum and teases the flesh with his teeth.

"I believe you were promised a feast."

Hannibal laughs, and it’s a dark, beautiful thing.

“Show me, Will. I want to see how radiant you can be.”

Chapter End Notes

The second chapter is less of a story continuation than an expanded retelling from Hannibal’s POV. I should have it up in a bit :)

Find more fan art and Hannigram shit on my Tumblr

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal remembers the first time he saw him.

The boy, wrist deep in a cooling corpse, had no idea. He continued to gut the stag with only an occasional wary glance at the surrounding trees. Few villagers even dared step into the forest. This one was cautious, but lacking in fear.

He watched Will spend a moment too long staring at the fallen animal. His fingers trailed over the creature's exposed ribs, drew across severed muscle, then brushed the creature's heart. Something dark flashed beneath the boy's eyelashes, something not unlike hunger. It was gone in the next second, and Will withdrew. He attempted to clean the blood from his hands.

Hannibal trailed him to the edge of the woods that day. He watched the boy return with his quarry and disappear behind the town gates. Hannibal knew then that he would keep an eye out for this one.

Will kept to himself. On the days where Hannibal would see him surrounded by others, it was always with diverted eyes and an uncomfortable tension bending the lines of his shoulders. He was just a boy then, barely sixteen, but he had no apparent relatives or caretakers beyond the village leader. Jack Crawford, who would sometimes clap Will on the shoulder and praise him for his hunting, still looked at him like something unfamiliar.

They, all of them, found Will strange. A girl with thick black hair and a witty grin was the only company the boy could keep.

Hannibal watched. Years passed as sacrifices came and went, and he wondered when Will would be bound and put forth as an offering. He was growing older, closer to the age when it could be him, the dawn of his twenty-first year approaching, and Hannibal was waiting. He was waiting with patience and certainty, eager to have the fearless boy tied and bleeding. Hannibal wondered how he would taste.

Then came the day Will killed someone.

The man was not from the village. An outsider on foreign land, a rifle slung over his shoulder as he walked the forest in search of prey. He wasn't the first and he wouldn't be the last that wandered too close to the town. Hannibal had amused himself with ones before, those who did not know or heed the warnings of the shadowed underbrush and soundless canopy. This man, though, had the eyes of a predator.

Hannibal knew his type. He knew how easily they crumbled when faced with something higher on the food chain. He found the crunch of their bones and the sound of their screams especially satisfying. But Hannibal knew Will was in the woods that day, and so he chose not to interfere.

The stranger stumbled upon Will by accident. The young man had been out on his weekly hunt, a smaller rifle slung across his back but out of reach. Will froze at the gun that rose to his face. He

hadn't missed the sadistic edge to the other man's smirk, the lecherous creep of eyes down his body. Will looked so young then, the first time Hannibal had seen him afraid.

It was delicious, but unexpectedly disquieting. He stood behind the edge of the clearing and wrestled with a compulsion to intervene.

The man directed Will to his knees, a finger on the trigger ready to assure compliance. He forced the boy to remove the gun from his back and push it away. Will trembled through the motions. The stranger shifted his hold on the rifle as he stepped forward, as he thumbed open the button of his jeans. Grinning ear-to-ear, the man raised a hand to fist in the curls above wide, panicked eyes.

He never made it.

Will struck up with all the force of a feral wolf, driving his knife into the other man's gut with barely a blink. He braced himself and tore the blade sideways. The intestines that spilled into his arms painted him red, as did the spray that spattered his face. The carcass slumped to the ground and Will remained, triumphant, and still standing.

He staggered backwards, dropped the knife, and looked to his hands in horror, but there was an undercurrent of excitement to his heaving chest. A sense of pride. The self-satisfaction that Hannibal had seen on him in the aftermath of a successful hunt, only magnified here. Covered in the blood and gore of the undeserving, Will looked righteous.

Hannibal couldn't help himself. He stepped into the clearing.

Will didn't notice him at first. He was wrapped in adrenaline and distracted by the lacquered liquid coating his palms. But he also had the instincts of a hunter, and he looked up eventually. He saw Hannibal, saw the monster he had only heard of in myth staring back at him, and the fear returned tenfold. He ran.

Will was as much an exceptional evader as he was a tracker. Rather than head straight back the way he came, the young man wove between the trees in an erratic pattern, his legs carrying him through the woods as fast as he could manage. To his credit, he avoided looking back. Not until he was nearly there, and he seemingly couldn't resist.

Hannibal caught him before he could clear the forest line. He pinned the younger man against rough bark and marveled at the how soft the skin felt under his claws. Left weaponless, Will could only stare up in terror as Hannibal took his fill. As he spoke words of devotion and fascination until the fear began to bleed from the younger man's scent. A reciprocal intrigue flourished in its place.

The creature of the forest knew there and then that it wouldn't let harm come to this boy. It needed to see more, and Will was only beginning to realize the extent of his capabilities.

He let Will return to the village, but Will came back. Tentative at first, eyes still wide and disbelieving. But he kept coming back. If his hunting trips expanded in number, no one remarked upon it. He returned with rabbits and foxes and deer and sometimes organs from something too heavy to drag from the woods.

These times, Hannibal took Will hunting.

He lured strangers deeper into the trees, sometimes from surrounding villages but often just another person passing through. People disappeared all the time from these woods. There were ageless superstitions, decades of sacrificial appeasements to constrain the danger to the tree line. Out of little more than persistent amusement, Hannibal respected their false sense of safety. But within the forest, all game was fair.

And Will looked so beautiful covered in blood.

He showed Will his human skin, too. Let the younger man trace the cut of his cheekbones with wonder. Will blushed at his nudity, tried to avert his eyes from falling on anything below Hannibal's chest, but the older man caught his face and tilted it down. Will's breath hastened, and Hannibal kissed him.

He pushed into Will for the first time that night, both sprawled nude on the forest floor. Beneath him, the younger man dug fingernails into his back and cried out so sweetly. He whined in Hannibal's ear, bit at his neck and panted for more. He was insatiable and shameless with a ferocity that matched Hannibal's endless obsession. Hannibal knew, then, that he'd never get enough. He knew then what he had to do.

Will had been chosen as the next sacrifice. But if Jack Crawford and the rest of them thought Hannibal would accept an offering that was already his, if they thought they could forfeit Will's life to save their own, well, Hannibal saw little reason to continue the farce they'd been playing. The village's fate was sealed, but he'd entertain one last little game.

He walked into the town square the day before the annual ceremony, a satchel slung over his shoulder. Jack smiled and shook his hand, roamed eyes over his vagabond appearance, and Hannibal smiled back and followed him to the town inn.

He caught a glance of Will just before he crossed the threshold of the doorframe. The boy knew nothing, not even how close his companions had been to pulling him aside this evening, to restraining him and locking him away for the next night. The villagers would have willingly spilt his blood and found fulfillment in the proceedings. Until the appearance of a convenient substitute, of course.

Hannibal winked just before the door shut behind him. It was worth it all just to see concern flash across the younger man's face. Misplaced, but endearing. He looked forward to every one of Will's expressions in the years ahead.

He thinks about this as he waits for Will to come back to him. As the firelight circling around him flickers over the blood running down his wrists and his eyes search out Orion in the night sky. He thinks about indulging himself, truly, for the first time in centuries. Of sharing his gluttony with the younger man, of watching flesh slip between plush lips as the world burns around them.

He can hear a figure approaching in the distance. He can smell relief and grudging amusement and exhilaration for what is to come.

Will has also waited long enough.

Chapter End Notes

Woo, thanks for reading! I don't currently have plans to write a longer story based on this, but I may write another snapshot or two from this AU in the future.

Will and Hannibal will eat your kudos and any comments will go towards helping Beverly get some therapy <3

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!